

1009.66 Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Program.--

(1) To encourage qualified personnel to seek employment in areas of this state in which critical nursing shortages exist, there is established the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Program. The primary function of the program is to increase employment and retention of registered nurses and licensed practical nurses in nursing homes and hospitals in the state and in state-operated medical and health care facilities, public schools, birth centers, federally sponsored community health centers, family practice teaching hospitals, and specialty children's hospitals by making repayments toward loans received by students from federal or state programs or commercial lending institutions for the support of postsecondary study in accredited or approved nursing programs.

(2) To be eligible, a candidate must have graduated from an accredited or approved nursing program and have received a Florida license as a licensed practical nurse or a registered nurse or a Florida certificate as an advanced registered nurse practitioner.

(3) Only loans to pay the costs of tuition, books, and living expenses shall be covered, at an amount not to exceed \$4,000 for each year of education toward the degree obtained.

(4) From the funds available, the Department of Health may make loan principal repayments of up to \$4,000 a year for up to 4 years on behalf of selected graduates of an accredited or approved nursing program. All repayments shall be contingent upon continued proof of employment in the designated facilities in this state and shall be made directly to the holder of the loan. The state shall bear no responsibility for the collection of any interest charges or other remaining balance. In the event that the designated facilities are changed, a nurse shall continue to be eligible for loan forgiveness as long as he or she continues to work in the facility for which the original loan repayment was made and otherwise meets all conditions of eligibility.

(5) There is created the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Trust Fund to be administered by the Department of Health pursuant to this section and s. [1009.67](#) and department rules. The Chief Financial Officer shall authorize expenditures from the trust fund upon receipt of vouchers approved by the Department of Health. All moneys collected from the private health care industry and other private sources for the purposes of this section shall be deposited into the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Trust Fund. Any balance in the trust fund at the end of any fiscal year shall remain therein and shall be available for carrying out the purposes of this section and s. [1009.67](#).

(6) In addition to licensing fees imposed under part I of chapter 464, there is hereby levied and imposed an additional fee of \$5, which fee shall be paid upon licensure or renewal of nursing licensure. Revenues collected from the fee imposed in this subsection shall be deposited in the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Trust Fund of the Department of Health and will be used solely for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this section and s. [1009.67](#). Up to 50 percent of the revenues appropriated to implement this subsection may be used for the nursing scholarship program established pursuant to s. [1009.67](#).

(7) Funds contained in the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Trust Fund which are to be used for loan forgiveness for those nurses employed by hospitals, birth centers, and nursing homes must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by contributions from the employing institutions, except that this provision shall not apply to state-operated medical and health care facilities, public schools, county health departments, federally sponsored community health centers, teaching hospitals as defined in s. [408.07](#), family practice teaching hospitals as defined in s. [395.805](#), or specialty hospitals for children as used in s. [409.9119](#). An estimate of the annual trust fund dollars shall be made at the beginning of the fiscal year based on historic expenditures from the trust fund. Applicant requests shall be reviewed on a quarterly basis, and applicant awards shall be based on the following priority of employer until all such estimated trust funds are awarded: state-operated medical and health care facilities; public schools; county health departments; federally sponsored community health centers; teaching hospitals as defined in s. [408.07](#); family practice teaching hospitals as defined in s. [395.805](#); specialty hospitals for children as used in s. [409.9119](#); and other hospitals, birth centers, and nursing homes.

(8) The Department of Health may solicit technical assistance relating to the conduct of this program from the Department of Education.

(9) The Department of Health is authorized to recover from the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Trust Fund its costs for administering the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Program.

(10) The Department of Health may adopt rules necessary to administer this program.

(11) This section shall be implemented only as specifically funded.

(12) Students receiving a nursing scholarship pursuant to s. [1009.67](#) are not eligible to participate in the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Program.

History.--s. 2, ch. 2002-230; s. 449, ch. 2002-387; s. 3, ch. 2002-400; ss. 70, 71, ch. 2002-402; s. 121, ch. 2003-1; ss. 1958, 1959, ch. 2003-261; s. 6, ch. 2003-400.